

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4, 7-10, and 13-32 are currently pending. No claims have been amended herewith.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 7, 21, and 27 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,704,008 to Naito et al. (hereinafter "the '008 patent"); Claims 2-4, 8-10, 22-24, 28, and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the '008 patent in view of U.S. Patent 5,260,797 to Muraji et al. (hereinafter "the '797 patent"); Claims 25, 26, 31, and 32 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the '008 patent in view of Japanese Patent JP11-113019 to Hideo (hereinafter "the '019 patent"); and Claims 13-20 were allowed.

The '008 patent, which is asserted against all rejected claims in the present application, has an effective reference date of January 24, 2001, which corresponds to the actual U.S. filing date of the '008 patent. The actual U.S. filing date of the present application is June 13, 2000. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the '008 patent does not qualify as a *prima facie* prior art reference against the claims in the present application. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejections in the outstanding Office Action should be withdrawn.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 7, 21, and 27 (and all associated dependent claims) patentably define over any proper combination of the '008, '797, and '019 patents.

F.P. 1/26/2004

Consequently, in light of the above discussion, the outstanding grounds for rejection are believed to have been overcome. The present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. An early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

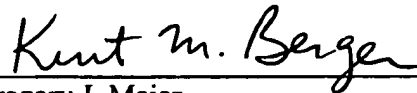
Respectfully submitted,

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